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LATER VERSES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

COLLECTED VERSES

WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY
H. J. FORD

Fcap. 8vo. 5s. net

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

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UNIVERSE OF
LATER VERSES

BY

ALFRED COCHRANE

AUTHOR OF 'COLLECTED VERSES'

WITH A FRONTISPICE BY

H. J. FORD

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
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PREFACE

SOME of the verses in this collection were published about twelve years ago in a small volume called '*The Sweeper of the Leaves.*' For permission to reproduce others I owe my grateful thanks to the editors of the *Cornhill Magazine*, *Country Life*, *Punch*, and the *Spectator*.

The majority of them were written before the war, and the only excuse for republishing them in these altered days is that, for me at least, they revive happy memories.

A. C.

481076

30. *Minia*
Ammonia

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THE SWEEPER OF THE LEAVES

WHEN Autumn's misty trail is drawn
In cobwebs on the sodden lawn,
When strewn about the garden ways
Lies the lost pomp of summer days,
The gardener sedulously sweeps
The withered leaves in yellow heaps,
And plies his broom on bed and border,
To bring untidiness to order.

Yet, while he sweeps, the restless breeze,
That whispers mischief to the trees,
Filling the drear October sky
With clouds of dead leaves hurrying by,
Strews them afresh upon the soil
As if in mockery of his toil.

Thinking it foolishness to mask
The obvious failure of his task,
To him as one who warred with fate
I deemed it well to demonstrate
How when his broom and he were gone
The russet leaf-storm still went on.

He heard me as he swept the walk,
Then leaned upon his broom to talk :

A

THE SWEEPER OF THE LEAVES

While, with an uncomplaining glance,
He watched the dead leaves whirl and dance,
And answered ere he bent once more
To sweeping, ' It were wuss afore ! '
He paused again. ' Beside,' said he,
' I'm one as canna let things be.
It ain't much use this time o' year,
Still, you can tell a broom's bin 'ere.'
He gave his head a thoughtful jerk,
And placidly resumed his work.

Marking his ineffectual zest,
I tried his moral to digest.
The world is full, it seems to me,
Of those who cannot let things be,
And human effort still achieves
Tasks like the sweeping of the leaves.
In every corner of the land
Gather the sweepers, broom in hand,
And still disorder mars the scene
Where they and their Reforms have been ;
And life, the while they travail sore,
Looks as untidy as before.

So be it : but although the staff
Of critics—who do nothing—laugh,
Yet has the littered landscape room
Ev'n for the sweeper and his broom ;
And it may be, one autumn day,
When effort falters by the way,

In hours when all applause is dumb,
That the reward of toil shall come.

For to the garden shall draw nigh
A more observant passer-by,
Who, even if the sight prevents
A prouder flow of compliments,
Will yet acknowledge, never fear,
That—*Some one with a broom was here.*

THE MILK CART

(IN THE MIDLANDS)

*COME up! Are you right there? Aye; gee
whoa!*

*For 'appen the kitchen clock be slow,
And it's all three mile as we've got to go
Along the lane from Burnaston.*

Behind the yard gate swings and shuts,
As the old mare, stumbling across the ruts,
Pulls out, with the yellow lamps alight,
Into the raw December night;
And 'twixt the hedges, and round the turns,
Jogs on with her load of banging churns.

For this is the tale and the task of the shire,
The tale that starts with the cows in the byre,
And ends down a hundred winding lanes,
With the carts that rattle to catch the trains,
And to leave in the wayside platform's gloom
Their tally of churns that bang and boom—
Gallons and gallons, pouring south,
Into the great town's thirsty mouth.

*Come up ! or we'll miss the seven-five,
And it's us as keeps the place alive,
Us and the clatterin' cart we drive
Along the lane from Burnaston.*

Surely this earth, where one lives and learns,
It spins to the sound of the banging churns,
And all mankind to that clang and boom
Must tread a measure from cot to tomb.

There is the town with the crowds that wait
Our cart that jolts through the stack-yard gate,
The town with its millions who strive and stir
For their dole of the kind earth's provender,
From my lady, gorgeous in lace and silk,
With her morning maid and her morning milk,
To the hungry children for whom our load
Means life or death in the Mile End Road ;
And here, at the other end of the chain,
Is Pegg's old mare in Burnaston lane.

*Come up ! they be cleverer far nor we,
The folk i' the town, but where 'ud they be,
Where 'ud they be, wi'out you an' me,
Bumpin' along from Burnaston ?*

CHRISTMAS CAROL

STAR in the East, of beauty rare,
That went before and stayed
Above the lowly threshold, where
The new-born Christ was laid ;
Star that rejoiced the wise men's eyes
On that first Christmas night,
You shine along the centuries
And touch the earth with light.

Hymn of goodwill and sins forgiven,
That from the midnight sky
Stole from the white-robed choir of heaven
In mystic harmony ;
You thrilled the listening shepherds' ears,
And still, with living power,
Proclaim across two thousand years
Peace in the anxious hour.

Ay, God be thanked, for many a heart,
By sorrow overborne,
May find its aching pass in part
Upon this Christmas morn,
May, though the way to truth be far,
And though the path be dim,
Still catch some glimmer of that star,
Some echo of that hymn.

THE FAIRIES

A YE ! they may see, who still believe,
The Fairies on Midsummer eve,
And catch the sparkle of their shoon,
Footing it in hay-scented meadows
Under the yellow moon.

Come, where the hedgerow warblers wake
Their serenades for summer's sake,
And, hidden in the leafy screen,
Amid the hemlock and dog-roses,
Watch the enchanted green.

Look at them as they form in line,
And mark their glow-worm lamps that shine,
The little folk of the woods and dells,
Tripping away to a lively measure,
Rung upon cowslip bells.

Can you not see them tread the ring,
Gossamer, Greensleeves, Silverwing,
Sober brownie and grinning elf,
All of them out of the tattered volume
Now on the schoolroom shelf ?

What, is there nothing there revealed,
Except a mown five-acre field,
A dewy fence, a rick of hay,
And somewhere, calling in the distance,
A corn-crake, far away ?

Alas ! alas ! these fancies find
The eyes of all but dreamers blind,
For only they who still believe
May see the Fairies in the moonlight
Dance on Midsummer eve.

SLEEPING KASPAR

I SEE you lying, warm and snug,
Stretched in the firelight on the rug,
And wrapped in that half-conscious doze,
Which much of its own sweetness knows.

Here in your dreams you try to catch
The rabbits in the bracken patch ;
You follow scents which are bewitching,
And set your paws insanely twitching.

Anon with sleepy yelps and howls
Are mingled fierce and threatening growls,
Meant, I suppose, to fill with fear
Such phantom dogs as venture near.

And yet in actual life I find
You something peaceably inclined,
And apt, it must be owned, to beat
In peril's hour a prompt retreat.

Well, some of us, resembling you,
Imagine deeds we dare not do,
Cravens, for whose ambition gleams
The torch of valour in our dreams.

TO THE FOUNDER

A SCHOOL SONG, TO THE MEMORY OF SIR JOHN PORT
WHO BY HIS WILL FOUNDED REPTON IN 1557]

SIR JOHN, he was a faithful knight,
Who lived when might was counted right,
When every man aspired to fight
A foe if he could find him :
But old Sir John abjured the fray,
And chose a less aggressive way
To leave a name behind him.

He looked and saw a village green,
A place where prior and monk had been,
And so therein a fitting scene
For his design discerning,
What time his quiet days were spent,
He left beside the river Trent
A seat of sober learning.

He said, These hallowed shades shall see
My Repton boys, remembering me,
Go forth in summer terms to be,
 The sons of my foundation :
To enter in the lists of life,
And serve in days of peace or strife
 Their God, and king, and nation.

So be it ours our Founder's will
With loyal purpose to fulfil,
Resolved, while yonder standard still
 Swings in the breeze before us,
To stand in all we say or do
To him and his tradition true,
 And sing our thanks in chorus.

*Old Sir John, gallant Sir John !
Jolly Sir John, you are dead and gone :
 Yet in your name, telling your fame,
The School of your founding still goes on,
 Steadfast in aim, playing the game,
And guarding the Gate that is free from blame.*

A CHILD'S EPITAPH

“ NEAR THIS PLACE LIETH THE BODY OF MARY THORP,
WHO DIED JUNE 13TH, 1782, AGED 11 YEARS ”

YOU feel, a hundred years away,
The sorrow of that summer day,
And see the quiet village street
That slumbered in the noonday heat.

Men went about their ceaseless toil
To tend the kine and till the soil,
While death, who came, perhaps, as friend,
Brought this brief stewardship to an end.

There stood the house of grief behind
The shuttered door and close-drawn blind,
And, where the churchyard grasses wave,
The mourners gathered round the grave.

They put her small belongings by,
The needle she was proud to ply,
The ciphering book that bore her name,
The halfworked sampler in its frame.

Then the blank outlook : days that came
Of life the same yet not the same ;
Day after day that seemed to wait,
Empty of joys and desolate.

Nay, surely through our distant dream
Diviner hopes of comfort gleam,
And memories of the Master's word
Still in the empty nursery heard ;

When tears were dried, perhaps, for some
By Him who bade the children come,
And hearts found healing in the touch
Of Him whose Kingdom is of such.

BALLAD OF THE ST. GOTTHARD TUNNEL

TO leave the sombre scene behind,
The driving mists that blur the view,
And issuing, from the darkness, find
Skies of a clear and cloudless hue,
Steeped in the sunlight of the South,
Which our grim North may never know,
From grey to white, from shade to light,
From Göschenen to Airolo.

From city crowds, from London modes,
To Capri cliff or Naples bay,
To oxen sauntering with their loads
Of brushwood down the Appian way ;
From dingy office, noisy court,
To linger where the olives grow,
From those to these, from toil to ease,
From Göschenen to Airolo.

And soon—too soon—for jealous Time
Abates no tittle of his powers,
For cloudy land, or sunny clime,
For working days, or leisure hours,
Too soon his measure running out
Will plunge us through the Alps again,
From these to those, from verse to prose,
From Airolo to Göschenen.

This black mysterious place of gloom,
Whose either end is light and shade,
What is it but some shaft of doom
Where human destinies are laid ?
For some the shadow, some the sun,
All travellers passing, maids and men,
From Göschenen to Airolo,
Or Airolo to Göschenen.

THE DESERTER

(WHO REFUSES FOR THE 12TH)

HOW now, you faithless absentee,
Now that the magic Hour draws near,
You urge an unexpected plea
Of duller claims that interfere !

I thought no mortal since the Fall
Gifted with strength of will to raise
Ramparts of conscience at the call
Of grouse and grilse and holidays.

Review it all—the rush from town,
The station platform stretching far,
The crowds, the hurrying up and down
In quest of the Fort William car ;

And that first moment of delight
When the long 8.15 swings forth,
To thunder through the August night,
And meet the daybreak in the North.

Until—how great the prospect seems !—
The faithful George beside your bed
Shall mingle in your restless dreams
With early tea at Garelochhead.

Ten minutes more of tea and train,
And hasty donning of attire,
And then—and then your feet attain
The wayside goal of your desire.

What next ? much baggage vanned and racked
Now quickly bundled out in tons,
And then the waiting motor packed
With rods and cartridges and guns.

I picture you the morning grey,
With glint of sunshine now and then,
And wonderful with scents that stray
From the wet larchwoods in the glen.

High on the pass the breeze is cool,
And local memories return
Of salmon in the Clachan pool,
And grouse above the Laraig burn.

So be it ; stoutly you resist,
But wait until the Hour arrives,
The Hour of mountain, moor and mist,
And see if your resolve survives.

JOACHIM

YEAR after year he came with spring,
With lengthening light and crocus flower,
But now no April days may bring
His matchless music back an hour.

Masters there are whose work will live
Upon the canvas or the page,
Though they themselves be gone, to give
Enjoyment to a later age.

But here and now the world must grieve
For one majestic master-mind,
Whose art will die with him and leave
Nothing but memories behind.

Well, these at least are ours, and when
Years shall the great tradition dim,
We may before less favoured men
Rejoice to have rejoiced in him.

LAZARUS

[“ REMEMBER THAT THOU IN THY LIFETIME RECEIVEDST GOOD THINGS, AND LIKEWISE LAZARUS EVIL THINGS ”]

STILL he lingers, where wealth and fashion
Meet together to dine or play,
Lingers—a matter of vague compassion—
Out in the darkness, across the way ;
Out beyond the light and the glitter,
And the warmth where luxury's laughter rings,
Lazarus waits—where the wind is bitter—
Receiving his evil things.

Still you find him, when blazing, burning,
Summer flames upon square and street,
And the fortunate ones of the earth are turning
Their thoughts to meadows and meadow-sweet ;
For far away from the wide green valley,
And the bramble-patch where the whitethroat
sings,
Lazarus sweats in his crowded alley,
Receiving his evil things.

And all the while from a thousand rostrums
Wise men talk about him and his woes,
Each with his bundle of noisy nostrums,
Torn to tatters 'twixt Ayes and Noes ;
Sage and Socialist, gush and glamour,
And it's little relief their wisdom brings,
For there's nothing for him out of all the clamour,
Nothing but evil things.

Royal Commissions, creeds, convictions,
Learnedly argue and write and speak,
But the happy issue of his afflictions
Lazarus waits for it week by week ;
Still he seeks it to-day, to-morrow,
With purposeless pavement wanderings,
Or dreams it, a huddled heap of sorrow,
Receiving his evil things.

And some will tell you of Evolution,
With Social Science thereto—and some
Look forth to the parable's retribution,
When the lot is changed in the life to come ;
To the trumpet sound, and the great awaking,
And to One, with healing upon his wings,
In the House of the many mansions making
An end of the evil things.

In the name of Knowledge the world grows healthier,
In the name of Freedom the world grows great,
And men are wiser, and men are wealthier,
But—*Lazarus lies at the rich man's gate* ;
Lies as he lay through human history,
Through fame of heroes and pomp of kings,
At the rich man's gate—an abiding mystery,
Receiving his evil things.

LIFE'S FAVOURITE

LIFE she loved him, she seemed the slave,
Slave of his lightest and least desire,
And so to his glorious youth she gave
Glory that youths admire.

Gifts she gave him of strength and skill,
Gave him lordship of teams and crews,
With the Love of the Game, and, better still,
Of playing it, win or lose.

An Eton spell and an Oxford spell,
Lore of tradition and pride of shop,
Worship of friends that spake him well,
With the run of the *Club* and *Pop*.

All good pleasures would come his way,
All good men give him nod for nod ;
His laugh and his greeting haunt to-day
Staircase E in the quad.

.

Then why did her favours end so soon,
Did she forsake, betray, forget,
When she sent him with his platoon
Over the parapet ?

Was it because he shewed her praise
In his glowing self that the thought would strike
Of vanished charms in the pleasureless days,
And it tortured her, lover-like ?

Or was she moved by a greater thought,
And dealt with him yet as friend by friend,
In bringing the wonderful work she had wrought
To its only possible end ?

SIR JOHN'S TOMB
(IN THE SOUTH TRANSEPT)

THROUGH the *Good Shepherd* on the panes
The level sunlight streams and stains
With splashes of bright colour thrown
Old Sir John Poynings carved in stone.

It blazons gorgeously the shield
Which once he bore on Bosworth field,
Two Falcons fettered—to proclaim
Across the years his fighting fame.

To tell how boldly he withstood
The king's advance from Sutton wood,
And with what zeal at close of day
He chased the remnant Loughborough way.

On vizor and on vambrace glints
A network of amazing tints,
Barring with gold and crimson bands
The gauntlets on his praying hands.

His hands, no longer raised, as when
He urged his ranks of fighting men,
No longer clenched to grip and ply
Yon doughty hilt against his thigh.

Gallant Sir John—you strove and fought,
You lived and loved, and rode and wrought,
And now—your fights and labours done,
You lie there praying in the sun.

Praying for what? for whom? who knows?
God's mercy on your friends or foes,
God's mercy on yourself may be
Your never-ending litany.

THE LAST GROUSE

TIS the last grouse of autumn,
Disturbed on the hill,
And the shouts of the beaters
Are piercing and shrill :
In my butt I await him,
Yet nothing espy
Except the dark moorland,
Except the dark sky.

Oh ! the prospect is dreary,
With snow on the ridge,
And weather more suited
For firelight and bridge :
On the wings of a blizzard,
With black clouds behind,
The last grouse of autumn
Comes whirring down wind.

Time was when in August
He rose from my boot,
And gave me an instant,
Though I missed him, to shoot :
But now, a tough veteran,
All whipcord and wire,
He's a speck far to leeward
Before I can fire.

I'll not hit thee, thou last one,
So swift and so tough,
Even granting I see thee,
Which is doubtful enough :
Thus vainly I scatter
My pellets like hail
At what I conclude is
Thy vanishing tail.

DIS ALITER

(ON A LEADER WHO DIED A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE
GENERAL ELECTION OF 1910)

*In crisis of revolt and raid
How were the Border hosts dismayed,
When from the field the word was told
That Harry Percy's spur was cold.*

As once rebellion bowed her head
At tidings of her Champion dead,
So now, five centuries after, Fate
Sends a like sorrow to the State.

Mysteries of death that no man knows,
The broken hope—the sudden close
Decreed for intellect and powers
By Him whose ways are not as ours.

Our milder age beholds the lists
Crowded with keen antagonists,
And hears the sound of battle rolled,
But—*Harry Percy's spur is cold.*

I PUBLISH THE BANNS

ABOVE the rector's desk appears
The rusty little book of banns,
From which he has, these forty years,
Announced our matrimonial plans.

“*Ye must declare it.*” Even so.
There follows an inviting pause,
While we are pondering if we know
A just impediment or cause,

“*Why these two persons*” should not face
The hidden future hand in hand ;
Why they should not together trace
That path which none may understand.

Yet, if with us the burden rest
Of pledging these unknown events,
Prophetic prudence might suggest
A thousand just impediments.

How shall our ignorance aspire
To guarantee the fervent vows,
The whispers heard in lane or byre,
By the dog-roses or the cows ?

Can we conjecture, you and I,
How he and she will play their parts ?
Our mute assent may ratify
Some tragedy of broken hearts.

Young man and maid ! I wake at last
From fancies profitless and dim,
To find our simple ritual passed
From chant to prayer, from prayer to hymn.

What do they sing ? I scan in vain
The work, whereas for him and her
He may have made the meaning plain,
Who is His own interpreter.

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

MINDFUL of pleasure past that makes
His durance harder far,
Your votary of commerce takes
His way past Temple Bar ;
And in his dingy chair he sits
Beneath a leaden sky,
Prepared to match his wandering wits
With them that sell and buy.

The office boys come peering in,
The clerks pass to and fro,
And a great money-making din
Roars in the street below ;
Yet let him toss aside his quill,
And all this noise is mute,
And he himself an idler still
Beside the Kyles of Bute.

For a clear west wind pipes and blows
With magic from the moors,
Scattering these uninviting rows
Of chimneys, flats, and floors,
Scattering, like leaves upon the lea,
Dull invoice, bill, and bond,
And bringing back a silver sea
With purple hills beyond.

Yonder's the summit of Goatfell,
And here distinct and clear
The *Edith* tossing in the swell
Off Auchenlochan Pier :
Then, while you watch, away she swings,
And round the point she ploughs
Against a lively breeze that flings
The spray across her bows.

But the sun sets : the wind's asleep,
And Donald twists the bait,
For which full twenty fathom deep
The greedy whiting wait ;
Or, last excitement of the night,
You hear a distant sound,
And watch the evening steamer's light
Pass onward, Arran-bound.

TO ELINOR

(TYING HER SHOE)

A SERIOUS thing it well may be
When shoestrings fall untimely free :
At five years old much effort goes
To readjust them into bows ;
I note the mental concentration
Demanded by the operation,
And understand it—we are found,
Uncle and niece, on common ground.

Take comfort ; Time, for all his power,
Permits an intermediate hour,
An hour of careless hearts and blithe,
An hour of lissom limbs and lithe,
When fuller youth at last awakes
To that activity, which makes
Feats like the tying of a lace
Comparatively commonplace.

Across that interval which lies
Between us, let me sympathise ;
I too, regard with deep respect
The process, while I recollect
My apoplectic zeal that bends
Breathless to those disordered ends.
Small nieces and stout uncles too
Know what it means to tie a shoe.

THE PIONEER

(GEORGE GREY, FEBRUARY 3, 1911)

HE heard the call of the wider spaces,
The voice of the lonely land,
And his work was done in untrodden places,
Where he held his life in his hand.

In savage regions of blood and slavery,
In haunts of horror and fear,
He carried the flag with a stedfast bravery,
A resolute pioneer.

With the wild, and the peril that lies behind it,
He gripped in a lifelong feud,
To find it at last—as all men find it—
Beaten but unsubdued.

So died as he lived—when the desert vastness,
That waited the destined day,
Sent forth its vengeance out of the fastness,
Vengeance to strike and slay.

AT QUEEN'S CLUB
(DECEMBER 13TH, 1902)

“ Some ... who remember every Rugby match since
eighty something.”

Oxford Magazine.

IT hints at a failing mind's obliquity,
An effervescence of senile blood.
Eighty something! a dim antiquity,
Was it before or since the flood ?
Surely the Ark was but just put by,
And the base of Ararat hardly dry.

Yet some of us, *laeti nostra sorte*,
Till the appalling truth was told,
Some on the hither side of forty
Hadn't considered ourselves so old ;
A fond delusion, which only proves
That the prime of life, as you reach it, moves.

Dates don't lie : it was sentiment blinded us
To the number of years that had slipped away,
Made us fancy (till you reminded us)
Eighty something was yesterday :
Kept in our memory, clear and plain,
Rugby fights of the Vassall reign.

When we worshipped the azure image,
Filled the air with our jubilant hoots,
Or rolled in the path of the rushing scrimmage,
And picked the ball from the trampling boots ;
Venturing deeds which, we quite allow,
We certainly should not venture now.

Now, as we lingered, like Tithonus,
Musing over our shipwrecked hopes,
In the arena that once had known us,
There was young Oxford round the ropes ;
And it seemed to ourselves that we were there,
Not as we are, but as we were.

There were the heroes of club and college,
Ruddy faces and lips agape,
Keen eyes searching the Tree of Knowledge,
The thistle for fig, and the thorn for grape :
Marvellous boys, for the part arrayed,
Cast for the drama that once we played.

In the pageant of Youth that never varies,
Winding its way along the High,
Under the shadow of old St. Mary's
Freshmen and fourth-year men go by ;
Sinner and Saint, a mingled throng,
Bounder and Blue—they pass along.

Scanty the solace, but indisputable,
Puppets that dance at the footlights we ;
The players change, but the play's immutable,
And what are the odds who the players be ?
Eighty something ! a year or two ;
What does it matter—we or you ?

FROM AIX TO ARGYLL

FOR me—the wanderer—to enjoy
The silver sunlight of Savoy ;
For you to watch the rain that fills
The burns on your Argyllshire hills.

For me the landscape's dazzling hue
Beneath a sky of turquoise blue ;
For you grey mists that shroud the plain,
And hide Ben Vorlich or Ben Vane.

For me the idle crowd that shews
Parisian frills and furbelows ;
For you, to serve the moorland's need,
The hob-nailed shoe, the skirt of tweed.

For me the band that bleats and blares
Its medley of enticing airs ;
For you the wailing pipes that bring
Old memories of an exiled king.

For me to lose my humble franc,
Or more, at the casino bank ;
For you to land and not to lose
Grilse or sea-trout, as Luck may choose.

Quot homines—the poet explains ;
Here pleasure at her gayest reigns,
And yet what would I give to stand
And play your gillie, gaff in hand ?

TO A ROUNDHEAD

(UPON THE 29TH OF MAY)

L IKE one who fought in Rupert's van,
A merry cavalier, I flout you,
Who come, you blue-eyed puritan,
Without a sprig of oak about you.
What ! you are all for Oliver,
And still remember disappointed
Those leaves that in the wind astir
So timely screened the Lord's Anointed.

Perhaps my monarch to your mind
Seems over-reckless and convivial ;
Perhaps your wisdom fails to find
Leisure for memories half so trivial :
Your sex that wearies for the moon
Awakes to such a sober playtime,
And busied with a serious June
Forgets a legendary Maytime.

Or else the earliest flush of dawn
This famous morning would have found you
Afoot upon the dewy lawn
With thrushes in the laurels round you,
Whose notes you rivalled bold and free
With songs of Carolean flavour,
The while you sought a proper tree
And plucked yourself a kingly favour.

BALLADE OF BIRDS'-NESTING

(TO G. N.)

TO you on sunny morns of May,
To you, with zeal and skill combined,
Are given, where'er our footsteps stray,
Discoveries of the choicer kind :
While I, in knowledge far behind,
As I confess with conscious blushes,
To modest exploits am resigned—
Blackbirds and chaffinches and thrushes.

For you the pipit in the brae,
To cheat all eyes but yours designed ;
The long-tailed tit upon the spray,
The creeper in the pollard's rind ;
The water-ouzel, moss-entwined,
Where down the rocks the streamlet gushes,
For me, as through the woods we wind,
Blackbirds and chaffinches and thrushes.

Yet spots I light on by the way
Well suited to the nesting mind,
Whose fitness might be, one would say,
By some observant bird divined ;
Secluded hollows, bracken-lined,
Inviting alcoves in the rushes ;
But in the end I only find
Blackbirds and chaffinches and thrushes.

ENVOY

The gifts of Fate are well defined,
To those that have, the luck that crushes,
To others, inexpert and blind,
Blackbirds and chaffinches and thrushes.

THE DEAD CHIEF

(A. N., OCTOBER 22ND, 1915)

CHIEF of the House, our tragic day
Of death in youth and broken powers
Sees your long life of service pay
Its debt to the consuming hours.

The Old Order changes ; at the last
It seemed to us an epoch died,
As that slow solemn pageant passed
Along the autumn riverside.

THE OLD GAMEKEEPER

IN actual years I understand
That he is turned of sixty-seven,
His rugged brows are seamed and tanned
With all the winds and suns of heaven ;
Yet, though about his beard and hair
Old Time has scattered snow in plenty,
He fronts you with a stalwart air,
As upright as a lad of twenty.

A patriarch this of gun and rod,
Of gaff and fly, of fur and feather,
Who upon fifty Twelfths has trod
With Don and Rambler through the heather :
Who as a round-eyed urchin stared
At older squires in strange apparel,
And can recall the present laird
A novice with a single barrel.

Year in, year out, his lot is cast
In none but outdoor occupation ;
Before his patient eyes goes past
The changeless pageant of creation ;
Year out, year in, the garnered sheaf,
The frost-bound earth, the April shower,
The mystery of the bursting leaf,
The nesting thrush, the budding flower.

On many a fragrant night of May,
All silver-white in moonlit beauty,
He waits and watches till the day,
A patient devotee of duty ;
While past the pines the brown owl swoops,
With silent wings and ghostly sailings,
He stands to guard the pheasant coops,
His back against the spinney railings.

A more romantic sentry might,
On some delightful revel chancing,
Have seen in the soft summer night
Great Pan amid his Dryads dancing ;
But his calm wits would not expect
So false and pagan an *imago*,
While he is wondering what effect
The dew will have on his lumbago.

In days when courtesy is dim,
And speech grown less polite and plainer,
You never fail to find in him,
The deference of the old retainer ;
He speaks about the crops and birds,
About the weather and the stubbles,
With some apologetic words
Of stiffness and rheumatic troubles.

With here and there a humorous touch,
Of which you catch a distant inkling,
And guess that it is meant as such
Because his honest eyes are twinkling ;
Then back to more professional ground,
To beats and spaniels, guns and setters,
As if herein alone he found
Fit conversation for his betters.

Yet among more familiar friends,
With nothing to suggest disparity,
Rumour reports that he unbends
To prodigies of jocularity ;
Nay, when the reels and jigs begin,
At Hallowe'en or Twelfth Night party,
Upon an ancient violin
He scrapes, a self-taught Sarasate.

Exciting stories, too, he tells,
Great feats of memory or invention,
And round the dying fire compels
The listening harness-room's attention ;
With moving anecdotes of sport,
Of midnight raid and poaching battle,
Or else, the more exciting sort,
Of ghosts that walk and chains that rattle.

I wonder if we joined the crowd
If he would pardon our intrusion,
Would he continue and be proud,
Or would we fill him with confusion ?
I dare not risk it : I must be
His comrade through the heather plodding,
To whom it is not given to see
This Homer of the gun-room nodding.

A BALLAD OF LABELS

(FROM LONDON)

DAME FASHION, when she calls the tune,
Must surely crave my pardon
For imprisoning me in leafy June
Far from my Alpine garden ;

So that in crowded square or street
My Fancy's playful mockery
Plants all the pavement at my feet
With treasures from the rockery ;

And so that, heedless to the claims
Of passing conversation,
I murmur to myself their names
By way of consolation.

The thread of compliment may run
Through many ball-room Babels,
I have one language, only one,
The language of the Labels.

In Kedar's tents are festive hours,
The *noctes* and the *coenae*,
My heart is where [RED ADMIRAL] flowers,
And crimson-starred [SILENE.]

In box or stall on opera nights
Between each thrilling scene I
Recall the miniature delights
Of [MENTHA REQUIENI.]

Admirers find me deaf and dumb
To all their honeyed wheedlings ;
I muse on [LONGIFOLIUM.]
On sedums and on seedlings.

And when they come to hint their loves
Through all the usual stages,
I wish I were in gardening gloves
Among my saxifrages.

THE GUIDE BOOK

COME forth, and brave our Northern sky,
Old comrade of the travelled ways,
For 'twixt your battered covers lie,
On pages scored with note and phrase,
The memories of enchanted days.

Your legend, while our grey fogs drift,
And while our angry sunsets frown,
Can, like Aladdin's carpet, lift
The dreamer up, and set him down
In Lombard plain or Tuscan town.

Where shall we wander ? Where abide ?
Somewhere with olive and with vine,
By Tiber or by Arno side,
By Mark's or Miniato's shrine,
On Pincian or on Palatine ?

Lead us through churches, those and these,
The Fountains, where the silence falls
Among the eucalyptus trees ;
Show us St. Peter's or St. Paul's,
In Fetter or Without the Walls.

Come where Benozzo Gozzoli
Makes the Riccardi chapel glow
With ranks of gorgeous Medici,
Or where the convent cloisters show
Visions of Fra Angelico.

Or where the Adriatic wave,
The tideway of the Sea-queen's power,
Still murmurs round her earliest grave,
And chants her requiem hour by hour
Beneath Torcello's lonely tower.

With you in hand we turn to trace
Once more the Doge's gloomy state,
We feed the pigeons in the Place,
And board the gondolas that wait,
Black shadows at the palace gate.

Back to your shelf : on many a night
You bring for him who sits at home
Your Odyssey of sound and sight—
Bargello, Forum, arch and dome—
From Milan, Venice, Florence, Rome.

TO MARJORIE

(AT CHRISTMAS, WITH THE *Lays of Ancient Rome*)

TO you, a poetess yourself,
A proper claim belongs
To treasure on your schoolroom shelf
This book of classic songs.

For had you lived in days of old
You would have joined the fray,
And on the bridge have helped to hold
Lars Porsena at bay.

Indeed I seem to see in you,
Child of our modern time,
Sparks of the fire that glitter through
These glories told in rhyme.

Oh, may no coming Christmas dull
The flame that in you glows !
Fancies are for the fanciful,
When all the rest is prose.

And when the iron facts of life
Are hard to understand,
May you find solace after strife
In some enchanted land !

For recollect that only they
May see the Fairies dance,
Who swing to light them on their way
The lanthorn of Romance.

THE SWALLOWS

(EARLY AVIATION DAYS, 1910)

OUR burnished pinions flash like steel,
As round your chimney stacks we wheel,
Home-comers on the wing again ;
We who have heard on Libyan sands,
Across the seas, across the lands,
The summons of the spring again.

So league by league, and day by day,
We praised upon our homeward way.

The Master who created us,
Till at the last beyond the miles
We found the welcome ridge of tiles,
Or mossy thatch that waited us.

Yet as our flying myriads drew
Towards the journey's end we knew
That something had excited you,
And, circling over square and street,
We wondered what surprising feat
Had startled and delighted you

Think of it ! All the joyful cries,
That seem to shake the April skies,
And make the budding branches stir,
Are tributes to a man's renown,
Who flew—who flew from London town
As far—as far as Manchester.

THE BLESSING OF ESAU

THE Triumph is his for evermore, who knew that
mine eyes were dim,
So came in his brother's place and bore the Blessing
away with him ;
While you, you must forth to the desert plain, to live
by the share or the sword,
And to reckon the man with the scheming brain for
ever as king and lord.

I gave him the Town—the Town—for his prize, the
shop and street for his dream,
The pavement stones for his Paradise, and a con-
quering self-esteem,
In the mart, I said, he shall fill his purse, he shall
sit where the mighty sit,
To dominate you—and the Universe—with his words
and his wealth and his wit.

I gave him for ever the loot, the luck, the verdict
at each appeal,
The vantage in every bargain struck, the aces in
every deal ;
For you may be strong, and he may be weak, and
fiercely your wrath may burn,
But he'll keep his cunning tongue in his cheek and
best you at every turn.

With this for the riddle of all your toil—that spite
of the lies he said,
For him you shall delve the kindly soil in the quest
of his daily bread ;
Seed-time and harvest you shall see, and garner the
gifts they give,
For you must labour that you and he, the fool and
the knave, may live.

.

And now, of your Blessing and Birthright reft
through all the uncounted years,
Is there never a place of repentance left, though
carefully sought with tears ?
Yea, I pledge you this, as the days go by, I will
torture his crafty heart
With a lingering doubt that shall never die, whether
his be the better part.

In his pomp and pride he shall feel the touch, the
touch of the magic earth,
And shall tremble to ask himself how much his prize
and his plots be worth ;
On some spring evening of cloud and shine, with
catkins grey on the bough,
With homing rooks on the sunset line, and plovers'
nests in the plough.

He shall envy you who far from the street can watch
the seasons pass,
Can watch the whiteness come to the wheat, the
greenness come to the grass,
The summer here and the winter gone, fulfilling the
steadfast plan,
Foretold by the bow in the clouds, whereon is
buildest the Life of Man.

Aye, then let him sit and twirl his thumbs, and
think, if but for the time,
Of the Town he built, with her reeking slums, and
her squalor of tears and crime,
Let him catch the breath of the April night, and I
wager that he shall wish
In his inmost heart he had not been quite so prompt
with the venison dish.

A LAODICEAN

(THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION—‘ THAT THIS HOUSE APPROVES . . . ’)

‘ THIS House approves . . . ’—from start to close

The motion struggles on ;
Tossed like a ball from friends to foes
With violent *pro* and *con*,
Amid the clash of arguments,
Which, based on fact or fiction,
Appear to show at all events
A wealth of stern conviction.

Surely, I said, the promise lies
Here of that happy man,
Who, when divided counsels rise,
Blooms forth a partisan ;
Who bends the weak ones to his yoke,
And tramps the King’s Dominions,
To pass the word to feeble folk
Who halt between opinions.

Yet is it so ? Time was when I
Would join in the debate,
Prepared a nostrum to supply
For all that ailed the State.
Existence could no problem show
Too tough for my digestion ;
I brought a stalwart Yes or No
To bear on every question.

I marvel now to think I earned
My schoolfellows' applause
By floods of fervent rhetoric turned
Upon the Irish cause ;
To think I rose, inflamed, incensed,
And made a fierce oration
For—or it may have been against—
Directness of taxation.

With dogmas builded on a rock,
The most convinced of seers,
I strove, a second Fawkes, to knock
To bits the House of Peers ;
In fact, whenever questions shook
The public, right or wrongly,
In less than half an hour I took
A side—and took it strongly.

According to my youthful lights
I launched a vigorous creed,
And rose to more egregious heights
When others disagreed ;
Prone to asseverate and assert,
Convinced and contumacious,
I did my utmost to convert
The world, like Athanasius.

Ah, there was then an open road
To follow or forsake,
Before the wider landscape showed
So many paths to take ;
Before the mind of middle life,
More supine or more supple,
Saw twenty aspects of the strife,
Where there were once a couple.

Now with a conscientious care
I grope towards the light,
And various verdicts I compare,
Which cannot all be right,
Until, when just about to take
My choice amid confusion,
I find new arguments which make
For quite a new conclusion.

What then ? If everywhere I see
Facts which refuse to budge,
I care not : nobody made me
A ruler or a judge.

These conflicts of the worst and best
May leave mankind divided,
While I may scan their struggling quest
Unmoved and undecided.

QUEEN ANNE

(A CONTEMPORARY LAMENT)

QUEEN ANNE is dead. The final page
Is writ of our Augustan age ;
An age of great things dreamed and done,
Of victories by great captains won,
With milder triumphs counted dear
By partisan and pamphleteer ;
An age adorned with hoop and patch
With pink brocade and silks to match ;
When beauty babbled half the day
About the teacups and the tray ;
Or in the Mall the linkmen ran
Before her ladyship's sedan !
Put out the lights—the word is said—
Put up the cards—*Queen Anne is dead.*

We yield our age to Time in trust
To guard when we ourselves be dust ;
Our gleaming tankards shall be set
In some collector's cabinet ;

Our ruddy brickwork, sunset-fired,
Shall be of every man admired ;
Our tall sash windows greet the dawn
On formal plot and misty lawn.
While this our closing phrase shall be
An oft-told tale's epitome,
Attesting as the years advance
Its own far-off significance,
When first the fateful message sped
That meant so much—*Queen Anne is dead.*

THE LITTLE HORSES

(AT THE CASINO)

MARQUEZ votre jeu, the croupiers shout
With one seductive voice ;
They turn the metal steeds about,
And bid you take your choice.
Which shall it be ? *le neuf* ? *le sept* ?
Behold them in a row,
And name the horse on which to bet
Your franc—at *p'tits chevaux*.

Le jeu est fait—they start the race,
And round the coursers spin ;
They circle at a rousing pace,
These thoroughbreds of tin ;
While round them a prophetic hum
Sways softly to and fro,
Some think *le deux* will win, and some
Le quatre—at *p'tits chevaux*.

Rien ne va plus—‘ tis almost done,
But two or three survive ;
Le cinq est passé, murmurs one,
Of too-ambitious five :
And, while some travel far too fast,
Some tarry much too slow,
One stops precisely right at last,
And wins—at *p'tits chevaux*.

Come, the conventional moral read
Upon your own account ;
Not too much or too little speed,
But just the right amount :
The knowledge that experience brings
Of just how far to go,
Will spell success at other things
As well as *p'tits chevaux*.

DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS

HOUR after hour, when the tidings came,
They called on the great Diana's name ;
A loud and a long defence they made
Of a threatened creed, and a threatened trade,
Of the faith that their fathers knew and taught,
And the craft that was like to be brought to naught ;
New faiths, new crafts, new creeds may be,
But Great is Diana—Great is she.

So is it yet, when the old things pass,
As the sands run down, run down in the glass ;
Still in the forefront, still with us,
Are the noisy zealots from Ephesus,
The men who would check Advancement's pace
By a series of shouts in the market-place,
The men who stand in the ancient ways,
Loudly singing Diana's praise.

Your iron steeds through the cutting scream,
But where is the *Highflyer's* famous team ?
In an idle column the hansoms stand,
While your taxi whizzes you down the Strand ;
And everywhere, always, beside the way
Lies the worn-out wisdom of yesterday,
The craftsmen who laboured and lived in state,
In days when Diana was reckoned great.

O Catos, fighting at hopeless odds
Against the causes that please the Gods,
In vain, in vain through the streets you cry
Your images nobody wants to buy ;
In vain you chant to the heedless earth
Of Diana's power and Diana's worth,
For the movement follows the usual lines,
And there's no more money in silver shrines.

PILOT

G REY-MUZZLED comrade of so many shoots,
You nose your placid way among the roots,
And lay the gathered quarry at my boots.

To think that years ago they called you wild,
A wayward thing, by foolishness beguiled,
To discipline but little reconciled.

The rabbit's savour lured you to the chase ;
You bounded joyously about the place,
To slink back afterwards in sore disgrace.

Age and experience modified your zeal,
And brought you, as dependable as steel,
Best of retrievers, soberly to heel.

Since then—I recollect it with a sigh,
How often under an October sky,
We've tramped the stretching stubbles, you and I !

Or, curbing our impatience as we could,
How often on December noons have stood,
Beneath the corner of the leafless wood !

Alas ! there comes, as I recite your praise,
Some whisper of the parting of the ways,
And dim forebodings of deserted days.

Labuntur anni—when I feel afraid,
I turn to watch you, philosophic, staid,
Plying with stolid industry your trade.

And see in you a heart of stouter cast,
That wastes no vain regrets upon the past,
But goes about his duty to the last.

THE COVERTS, 1914

(TO AN ABSENT ONE)

WE shot them early, shot them blind,
For guns were difficult to find,
But still the old, the stiff, the thin,
We raked them out, we raked them in ;
The halt, the breathless, and the stout,
We raked them in, we raked them out,
Until at last we stood arrayed
A famous Out-of-date brigade.

Less fun than usual seemed to mark
Our first advance across the Park,
And no-one felt inclined to tell
Those anecdotes we know so well.

Then, opening at the Long plantation,
Your correspondent took his station
Behind the oaktrees by the mere
Where you were next to me last year,
Last autumn—last November—no ;
That was a thousand years ago.

In the North wood I occupied
That narrow and perplexing ride,
A place which, if I recollect
Aright, you specially affect,
Where come as something of a shock
Brief glimpses of the floating cock,
And where I plaster far and nigh
A strip of unoffending sky.

So on and so forth ; here and there
We stood, our anxious thoughts elsewhere,
And wandered on from stand to stand,
The mid-day paper in our hand,
Conversing as we went our way
About last night's *communiqué*.

MURUM AEDIFICANT

(AMATEUR ROCK-GARDENERS)

HERE where the quarry shale is soft,
Where frequent land-slides fall,
Enormous rocks are borne aloft,
And—Balbus builds a wall.

Assistant gardeners work their best
To excavate the loam,
And pile the boulders with the zest
Of him who founded Rome.

Some down the slope the rubbish fling,
While some with ardour pull
The ivy-roots, and others bring
Leaf-mould by barrowsful.

What though, with wastes of trodden clay,
With shreds of bramble torn,
Our new creation looks to-day
Disordered and forlorn ?

What though, regarding as their prize
Each seedling that aspires,
The rabbits peer with hungry eyes
From underneath the briars ?

No matter ; still with faith sublime
Hope runs her usual rig,
And promises a tidier time
To those who plant and dig :

A time when phlox and iberis
Shall grace the coping's brink,
When saxifrage and arabis
Shall tenant every chink—

A patch of green, a cloud of white,
A splash of purple spilt,
In other Aprils making bright
The wall that Balbus built.

THE FOURTH RIDDLE, 1918

(PROVERBS XXX. 18, 19)

*LIFE shewed the Wise King riddles three,
Eagle and snake and ship at sea,
Yea, and a Fourth—the text goes on—
A Fourth thing staggered Solomon.*

Within the workshop's busy walls,
Draped in your war-time overalls,
In farm and garden, field and byre,
 (Great heart !)
You labour with a patriot's fire.

Now you behold your triumph won,
For here, as meed for service done,
Is freedom of our wordy fight,
 (Wise heart !)
That strives to set Creation right.

What sober aims and ends are these !
Yet she who rose from whirling seas
Still tarries with us, fact or myth,
 (Dear heart !)
A goddess to be reckoned with.

She whispers through the clash of blades
Her same old rede of men and maids,
And of that power, though khaki-clad,
(Sweet heart !)
That drove—and drives—Creation mad.

*So we may mock his mysteries three,
Who climb the cloud and plumb the sea,
But, proof against our earthquake test,
The King's Fourth Riddle stays unguessed.*

HAMBLEDON

(AND WHENEVER A HAMBLEDON MAN MADE A GOOD HIT . . . YOU WOULD HEAR THE DEEP MOUTHS OF THE WHOLE MULTITUDE BAYING AWAY IN PURE HAMPSHIRE, " GO HARD ! GO HARD ! *Tich and turn ! Tich and turn !*") *Nyren.*

YOU, batsmen of our later days,
Who stand erect and proud,
What time your frequent fourers raise
The plaudits of the crowd,
Here is the kindled zeal aflame
That first began to burn,
When those old Hampshire yokels came
And shouted " *Tich and turn !*"

You, critics with the captious eyes,
Your vigilant review
From the pavilion balconies
Is nothing strange or new ;
Your prototypes were met in strength
With sapient nod and smile,
To pass the word on *Barber's* length,
Or *Harry Walker's* style.

You, patrons of the cheaper seats,
The fervour and the thirst,
With which you celebrate the feats
Of *Hayward* and of *Hirst*,
Recall the rustic partisan
Who drank to the renown
Of *Small* or *Scott*, or *Noah Mann*,
Long since, on Windmill Down.

When to acclaim the master-stroke
Our modern cries resound,
Applause that cleaves the Sheffield smoke,
Or thunders from the Mound ;
What is it but the village voice
That made the welkin ring,
To hail the champion of its choice,
When Farmer George was King ?

To rank and wealth in all their pride
Upon the coach displayed,
To impecunious youth astride
The playground's palisade,
To ardent patriots on the tram,
Who follow by degrees,
From cablegram to cablegram,
The Test match overseas,

The fever spreads : while far away,
 Across the vanished years,
Ring forth on afternoons of May
 Those Hambledonian cheers :
That strange enchantment, after all
 They were the first to learn,
Who watched the strife of bat and ball
 With shouts of "*Tich and turn !*"

THE YOUNG IDEA

(AT WALK)

YOU wander about my gravel walks,
(*Barmaid, Barmaid, in with you, Barmaid !*)
You tumble among the carnation stalks,
And the children laugh, and the gardener talks.
(*Barmaid, forrad away !*)

Our sober pug at your folly scowls,
(*Barmaid, Barmaid, in with you, Barmaid !*)
But you roll him over, despite his growls,
And playfully bite his ear till he howls.
(*Barmaid, forrad away !*)

Wild oats, young lady. The flowers of June,
(*Barmaid, Barmaid, in with you, Barmaid !*)
And the fun of life will be over soon :
Then, what of the grey November noon ?
(*Barmaid, forrad away !*)

What of the serious work ahead,

(*Barmaid, Barmaid, in with you, Barmaid !*)
When the horn has gone, and the rogue in red
Is slinking away from the osier bed ?

(*Barmaid, forvard away !*)

VERBA NON FACTA

WHEN once again he hears the voice
Of umpires calling "Play,"
Needs must the veteran's heart rejoice
The challenge to obey.
He sees the line of boundary flags,
The tent, the scoring-board,
And cannot credit that he lags
Superfluous on the sward.

Cheerful he comes, although he feels
That this, the greatest game,
In every batting-list reveals
A certain loss of fame,
When he, the old protagonist,
Observes with some surprise
The name that used to head the list
Placed next before the byes.

What then ? He takes the thing to mean
That more experienced nerve
Will form—should panic supervene—
A capable reserve ;
And that, when youngsters fear and quake,
His destiny's command
Dictates a glorious chance to make
A long last-wicket stand.

As with the bat so with the ball,
And byegone hours come back,
When he was honoured with the call
To open the attack :
Alas ! this compliment is gone,
Captains and creeds are strange,
And all too rarely he goes on
Till sixth or seventh change.

Well, he can still be happy while
He waits his turn to bowl,
And lay with a contented smile
This unction to his soul ;
That when the score is mounting high,
And batsmen work their will,
These are the straits that really try
And test a bowler's skill.

Thus, although laid to all intent
And purpose on the shelf,
Will he extract from the event
Some solace for himself ;
And though brief sojourns at the crease
His hopes of triumph baulk,
They give long intervals of peace
When he may rest—and talk.

Sheltered beneath a broad-brimmed hat,
His spell of fielding done,
He sits, as once old Kaspar sat,
And gossips in the sun,
Of many a noble innings played,
That won applause and praise,
Of runs that great Achilles made
In ante-test-match days.

And ever, as his present deeds
Advance a milder claim,
In those far-off Elysian meads
He plays a finer game ;
And ever, as his youth retreats,
From memory's kindly stores
He gleans more splendid bowling feats,
And more amazing scores.

THE LAST POSTBOY

LAST of his kind, let him a claim to elegy
advance,
In honour of the part he played in Life and Life's
romance,
Who with the post-chaise used to wait, his old roan
nag astride,
Against the sign-post in the lane for bridegroom and
for bride.

He knew, he guessed at nothing—he was deaf and
dumb and blind,
But he sprang his weary horses at the sound of
wheels behind ;
Then ducked his cap discreetly when the atmosphere
grew hot,
And he heard the shouting voices, angry oath and
pistol shot.

To us, a prosier people, he is gallant if grotesque,
A pantomime conspirator, preposterous, picturesque,
Yet with a flavour of the days when men would do
and dare,
Before the blacksmith's anvil was exchanged for
Eaton Square.

So think upon him gently, for to many a wavering
will
He sat, a symbol of the die cast down for good or ill,
And many men, and many maids, whose ardour
burned like Etna,
He piloted—one likes to hope—to happiness and
Gretna.

LAMPADEPHORIA

(SCHOOL TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION)

BUGLES and drums and measured paces,
Torches that flicker in the air,
Serried squadrons of eager faces
Lit by the dusky flare ;
In the June twilight see him stand
Youth with fire in his hand.

Here where the brothers of Saint Augustine
Once in the far-off summertide,
Serving the God that they put their trust in
Pondered and dreamed and died,
On the quiet journey that wound along
From Matins to Evensong.

Waits, where the white-haired dreamers waited,
Waited the call of the silent night,
Youth invincible, youth elated,
Youth all-armed for the fight ;
Comes where the worn-out brothers came
Youth with his torch aflame.

Peril and pain shall daunt him never ;
Nay ! he shall overrun the earth.
What shall he not of bold endeavour,
He with his pride and worth ?
Hurrying onward, climbing higher,
Always carrying the fire.

OXONIENSIS OXONIENSI

(CECIL RHODES DIED MARCH 26TH, 1902)

OUR mistress of the Golden Gate,
She hath her tale of noble sons,
Whose names in annals of the State
Are writ for him to read who runs ;
Glorious and great protagonists,
Each in his own allotted span,
Who triumphed in the crowded lists
And bore her colours in the van.

She knows her champions of the past,
Whose deeds of righteousness and truth
Have dignified the Queen that cast
Her spell about their hour of youth ;
But, though she scan her records well,
And search her golden roll of fame,
She finds therein no parallel
To set with this amazing name.

No son who fought and thought as he,
Nor one who bore so far afield
Through such strange shifts of destiny
The aegis of her azure shield :
Not one like this adventurous heart,
Who rose to greatness, blame, and praise
In lines that fell so far apart
From her sequestered garden ways.

Dead worthies in her graves are laid,
For each his carven stone survives,
Half-hidden in some cloistered shade,
As grey and quiet as their lives ;
He sleeps beneath another sky,
Sleeps in the trackless waste that seems,
Lonely and vast, to testify
To his illimitable dreams.

EASTER PSALMS

(1918)

KINGS of the earth stand up and thunder,
(Can you not hear the battle strains ?)
Come let us break their bonds asunder,
Come let us cast away their chains.

Then music more subdued in sound
(Oh, anxious hearts !) the prophet sings,
Of mercy, and of refuge found
Beneath the shadow of Thy wings.

Yet ends in triumph at the last,
Of wondrous work (Oh, splendid youth !)
And of commandments standing fast,
That are done in equity and truth.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

STAND round the piano, old and young,
The bells—the bells of Saint Nicholas !
And ere the New Year's chime be rung,
Let the Old Year's farewell be sung,
As we wait for the bells of Saint Nicholas.

Old Year, good night ! He must not stay.
The bells—the bells of Saint Nicholas !
Draws to its close his latest day ;
For good or evil he's away,
To the sound of the bells of Saint Nicholas.

Now forth into the winter night ;
The bells—the bells of Saint Nicholas !
Come where the frosty lawn is white ;
Come out ; the calendar's alight,
And wait for the bells of Saint Nicholas.

Hark ! the clock tells the Old Year's doom ;
The bells—the bells of Saint Nicholas !
Far off the guns begin to boom,
And the chime crashes through the gloom,
The chime of the bells of Saint Nicholas.

New Year, New Year ! May we be bold
The bells—the bells of Saint Nicholas !
To face the secrets yet untold
Which your mysterious hours may hold.
Listen to the bells of Saint Nicholas.

Surely to comfort our alarms,
The bells—the bells of Saint Nicholas !
They show beyond all hurts and harms
Stretched forth the Everlasting Arms.
Listen to the bells of Saint Nicholas.

EPHEMERIS

(THE MAY-FLY)

YOU fluttered forth above the sedge,
Fulfilled with joy of living,
You danced along the water's edge
Without the least misgiving ;
Yet, fluttering, dancing, nearer drew,
By some strange impulse bidden,
To that bright surface where, I knew,
Your certain doom lay hidden.

Then, underneath the alder boughs,
You lighted on an eddy,
As if your sunlit hour's carouse
Had wearied you already ;
And, while you preened your gauzy wings,
A cheerful and a gay fly,
I saw the spread of circling rings,
Where there had been a May-fly.

Such was your life to death from birth,
And, dazzling in its brevity,
It seems to set a curious worth,
By contrast, on longevity ;
So that, if measuring our careers,
My longer limit flatters,
I ask myself if, hours or years,
The difference really matters.

Thus do I spin your elegy,
Yet, knowing what shall follow,
I feel my sentiments to be
Not only trite but hollow ;
One waiting for the trout to rise . . .
Admits the thought as treasonable,
Yet cannot reckon your demise,
Though tragic, as unseasonable.

The spot where, resolute or rash,
You chose to float and flounder,
Concealed, to judge him by his splash,
A good three-quarter-pounder ;
Above whose greedy nose shall sail,
Just where he rose to strike you,
A fly with something in his tail,
Like you—yet not quite like you.

THE MERMAID

(OF THE FOUNTAIN. SHE STANDS IN THE HIGHLAND GARDEN, WITH A SPOUTING DOLPHIN IN HER ARMS, AND LOOKS ACROSS THE LOCH)

*Q*UEEN of some dim, sea-murmuring, cave,
I look across the gleaming wave
From Kinglas Point to Dunderave.

Admire me, sometimes grave and sad,
Sometimes inscrutable and glad,
Like one that wonders if my years
Of vigil bring me mirth or tears.

About me now are joyous tones,
And pattering feet upon the stones,
Voices that call on lawn or beach,
With children answering, each to each.

An exile here—ah me ! ah me !
I envy those who gain the sea,
Sportive and splashing and alive,
Mermaids themselves, who swim and dive.

And if some envy me, who wish
That they, like I, had got a fish,
No matter—all is blithe and gay,
Laughter and Life and Holiday.

*What's Life to me, to spend or save,
Who look across the Eternal wave
From Kinglas Point to Dunderave ?*

To-day, To-morrow—even so ;
The golden Augusts come and go,
Until on this deserted hall
The shadows and the silence fall.

The laughing voices ring no more,
The redshank whistles down the shore,
The great stag roars on Cruach-side,
The great sea murmurs, tide by tide.

My garden kingdom holds but me,
My dolphin spouts with none to see,
While here, the lonely winter through
I wait and watch and wait for you.

*So, year by year, half-glad, half-grave,
I look across the sunset wave
From Kinglas Point to Dunderave.*

THE TRIUMPH OF ORIANA

THE TRIUMPH OF ORIANA

(QUEEN ELIZABETH DIED, MARCH 24TH, 1603)

*L*ONG live fair Oriana ! So
We celebrate her praise,
With these quaint compliments that go
Back to her spacious days.

What though the years have wrought their will,
What though the Queen be old,
Though night be fallen on Latmos Hill,
And all the tale be told ;

She still shall triumph, never fear,
So long as history's page
Brings back for us the atmosphere
Of her amazing age.

Her sailors, poets, men of state,
Her courtiers on their knees,
The storms that blew to dissipate
Her foeman's argosies,

She moves among them, grim and grave,
And, while her memory stands
For that proud enterprise that drove
Far over seas and lands

Her kingdom's glory, ever shall
The centuries acclaim,
As in our loyal madrigal,
Fair Oriana's name.

THE MASTER'S MATCH. 1889-1914

(EPILOGUE TO A BOOK OF THE SCORES OF A VILLAGE CRICKET MATCH, PLAYED EVERY SEASON FOR FIVE AND TWENTY YEARS, AT ETWALL, IN DERBYSHIRE)

THOUGH critics visit with disdain
This book, and canvass it in vain
For stirring deeds and striking thoughts,
Amid a tale of ones and noughts ;

What matter ? for the faithful few,
Who turn these pages in review—
For them this homely record lies
Instinct with happy memories.

Memories of matches lost and won,
Of summer afternoons and sun,
Of many a doughty innings played,
Of catches missed and catches made.

Again upon the village ground
Comment and colloquy go round,
In the slow friendly Midland tongue,
Echoing from years when we were young.

Again the light and shadow pass
Across green slopes of Meynell grass ;
The incense of the fallen hay
Comes from dim meadows Trusley way.

Dull figures ? Nay, an Epic told
By warriors obsolete and old,
And piped to an enchanting tune
By all the radiant gods of June.

HOLIDAY IN WARTIME

(TO M. F. N.)

THERE *are* no noisy London streets,
No Huns, no guns across the sea,
Only the summer sun that beats
Down upon lawn and lilac tree,
Lilacs and lawns in Arcadie.

No orgie of appalling sound,
Only the song of soaring lark,
And, when the twilight hour comes round,
Late-calling cuckoos in the park,
And night-jars thrumming through the dark.

While in the wood the pipes of Pan
Hold forth—at least for you and me—
Promise of some diviner plan,
When in the peaceful days to be
Shepherds return to Arcadie.

THE TWO LAST COLLECTS

YOU shall read your portion of Book and Psalter,
With the First of the Day appointed there,
And the two last Collects shall never alter,
But daily be said at Morning Prayer.

Is it all lip-service, and grown habitual,
Since that shall be that hath ever been ?
Nay : something shall one day light your ritual,
To show what the two last Collects mean.

You shall pray the Author of Peace to friend you,
For all your frailties and all your faults,
You shall pray that His strength may still defend
you,
His humble servants, in all assaults.

Then, safely brought to the day's beginning
By the power of the everlasting might,
You shall promise yourselves, the weak, the sinning,
To do that is righteous in His sight.

And courage may fail, and hearts may falter,
But His protection shall never cease,
Like the two last Collects that never alter—
You shall always pray for Grace and Peace.

WEDDING HYMN

TO Thee our prayers, O Saviour, rise
That from Thy throne above
Thou wilt behold with gracious eyes
Thy servants' act of love.

For Thou hast bought us with a price,
Thyself the first to teach
To what great heights of sacrifice
Redeeming love can reach.

So bless Thy children here, we pray,
Who, joining life to life,
Before Thine altar kneel to-day
To leave it man and wife.

Grant that through all their earthly care,
With Thee their only guide,
They may till death Thy promise share
Together side by side.

And in that land which doth not see
Or sun or moon by night,
Whose gates are praise, where God shall be
Their everlasting light ;

When all the shadows are withdrawn,
Before Thee they may stand,
To welcome the eternal dawn.
Together hand in hand.

THE HAPPY YEARS

(PROLOGUE TO A REPRINT)

THE Happy Years—the years that went before,
The years whose epitaph is writ in gold,
You that were happy in them, turn once more,
Turn and review their tale already told,
And, as a fitting Prologue, open out
The Book of Recollection—and behold

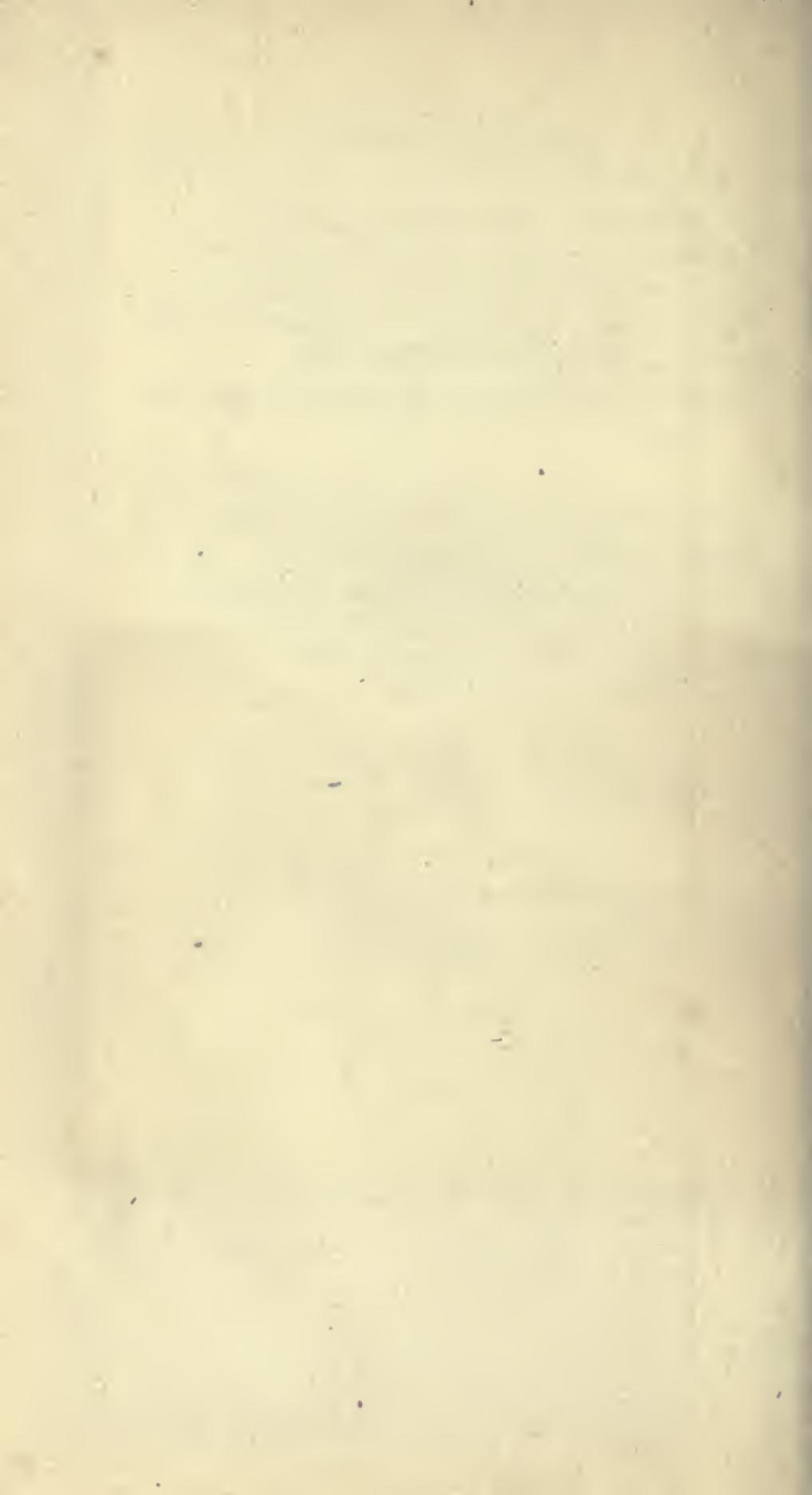
What pictures lie therein—blue carpets drawn
Of harebells in Calf Close at every turn,
The blaze of rhododendrons on the lawn,
Scarlet *tropaeolum* and grey stone urn,
Walks in the Yaxes and the Serpentine,
With Joe and Caspar hunting in the fern.

Peach-blossom pink against the greenhouse pane,
And tits like sapphires dancing on the tree ;
The white spring evening in the West again,
Green dragon cups and new-laid eggs for tea ;
Violets and freesias in the dining-room,
Freesias and violets—that such things could be !

The bustling humours of the midnight jaunt,
That bore us Northward to enchanted ground,
To wade brown rapids that the salmon haunt,
To climb steep corries where the grouse are found ;
What expectation as the day drew near,
What festive gatherings when the Twelfth came
round !

The many Happy Christmases that brought
Children and crackers, revelry and fun,
Wizards that mutter, Indian braves that fought,
Carols and presents, and the Currant Bun ;
With hallowed rites that greeted the New Years,
As the Old Years departed one by one.

Good Bye, old Happy Years ! We look across
To your calm spaces from our stormy day,
To treasures of Remembrance which no loss,
No tears of afterward, can take away,
To a glad heritage for grateful hearts,
Who on your grave their withered tribute lay.



Cochrane, A. 1810-10
Later verses

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